Stoics of reddit, how do you approach art?

Stoic Meditation

Ancient stoics might've not contributed to aesthetics and art directly, but it is considered a virtue. I would say a good art is the one that have a attractive nature, it's a strong way of communication that simply transcends verbal language and evokes feelings and memories through a aesthetic reaction. On top of that, ethics also plays a important role.

However, the art back then wasn't the same as today. We see rap music like this one that totally breaks ethics and incorporate things like crime, drugs, fame and hedonism as the aspects of an ideal lifestyle. Biggie's lyrical creativity and reputation as an gang member that brought him to spotlight, but also (probably) the reason that killed him. Still, it is considered the top rapper of all time and a mouthpiece of most poor people from the ghettos. Society don't allow them to have the se opportunities, so they find the only option in crime life, and after passing through ups and downs, they find a beauty in it uses creativity to express themselves.

However, it also have it's downsides since it's controversial topics and direct attacks to institutions responsible to maintain ethics and order like the government and police. And other types of music attacks religion, sexual preferences, etc.

As time passed, art became more complex. Since it's a way of expression, it also has the power to provoke and offend but it can be justifiable as an "cultural expression" even if it it's not ethically acceptable, and can be appreciated. But since it has also the power of influence, it can propagate hate and promiscuity. It's obvious that parents won't let their kids smoke weed or kill cops, so they won't show this kind of stuff to them. That is a sign of how some art can have a negative impact in someone's life.

And since we are all interested in stoicism and it's virtues, is that how art should be? Since we have notions like duty and social responsibility, should we consider these kind of expressions "art"? So they occupy the same realm as classical music and poetry just because it's an expression? Does ethics and art shouldn't be working together?

PS: I'm not attacking rap music or black people, i enjoy Biggie's creativity so much, but when it comes to ethics i always have

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concilie provocative art with a stoic
.ıe that it's actually a matter of choice rather than accepting both with virtue.

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bluntlybipolar • 3y ago

"Art should comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable." - Cesar Cruz

Art like that kind of rap is Virtuous and ethical. It was a spotlight on a side of America that was completely invisible to many white people. Could it be responsible for negativity? Sure. But so is the War on Drugs, failed drug policies, rampant poverty, and absolutely no one in power and privilege giving a shit so long as it was out of sight, out of mind. It's aching for justice.

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Gambling_Ancalagon • 3y ago

I was about to post something along these lines, but you worded it better than I could have.

3

GD_WoTS • 3y ago • Edited 3y ago
Contributor

I get what you're saying, but in Stoicism, virtue refers to purity of reason and intention, so art itself cannot be inherently virtuous--it depends on what informs its creation. Anyway, the last part of your comment reminds me of Scarface's timeless *Hand of the Dead Body*. Or Freddie Gibbs' excellent bar *slangin' and bangin', my paper stay gettin fatter/so do Black lives matter when you bout to kill your enemy?*

edit2 another good one from Gibbs: *Way too busy countin that cake to think about genocide/pocket full of stones but I'm killin my own*

2

bluntlybipolar • 3y ago

Yeah, that's why I specified that type of rap, meaning political or grounded in reality.

Definitely wouldn't put it in the same category as pop, stadium country, and the watered down rap that eventually flooded the industry. And yeah, a Scarface and the Geto Boys' music would fit the bill.

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Skip to main content

UncleJoshPDX • 3y ago

Contributor

I seem to remember that in The Republic artists were to be censored by the state, which I think is a dangerous idea.

Artists have a role in society. It is the same role as prophets and philosophers. Art shows us reality from a different point of view. Even with the constant introspection we do practicing Stoicism, art can show us something we know from a new viewpoint that can make us see things differently. We should not be afraid of the truth.

> If anyone can refute me--show me I'm making a mistake or looking at things from the wrong perspective--I'll gladly change. It's the truth I'm after, and the truth never harmed anyone. What harms us is to persist in in self-deceit and ignorance.
> -- Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 6.21

There is also a quote from the Meditations about seeing things from other people's point of view, the "walk a mile in their shoes" stuff that I can't seem find a citation for right now.

Art does this. By showing us the familiar in an unfamiliar way.

Art is also subjective. Art speaks to some people and not others. It communicates on so many levels it cannot communicate consistently. Communication is what is broadcast, and what is received, and its reception is rarely perfectly matched to the intention.

As viewers of Art, we should be open to these experiences while keeping an eye for the truth.

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home_iswherethedogis • 3y ago

Contributor

All art is created to get either the creator or the receiver to *feel* something. So on that level, all art is valid.

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GD_WoTS • 3y ago

Contributor

philosophical bent, since we can verily learn from different, even wrongheaded, perspectives. That said, it's much easier just to listen to something wholesome, like Lend a Hand by Ijahman Levi, or Chemical Christ by Thy Art is Murder. Or just to skip the music and listen to whatever is going on (I call this god's music), or to think and conduct "spiritual exercises."

2

[deleted] • 3y ago

But isn't wrongheaded perspectives bad for the society ? Shouldn't we be against it?

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GD_WoTS • 3y ago
Contributor

As one example, there's a song called "Why am I a Rastaman?" by Culture. I don't have to agree with all of Rasta to be inspired when I hear "But that could not change him, his mind was not in prison, it was only his body man!" Also, it's valuable because I can come to understand other people more—now I understand that Culture became a Rastaman because his role model was a Rastaman.

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[deleted] • 3y ago

By walking

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TheOSullivanFactor • 3y ago • Edited 3y ago
Contributor

There was no rapper as gangster as Medea and Chrysippus wrote enough about that work to be parodied through all of history.

Lupe Fiasco's Tetsuo and Youth is a top 3 album for me; it's very hip-hop and very philosophical.

EDIT: On a re-read I highly disagree. Plato threw out Homer because it wasn't "ethical" enough for his Guardians; Zeno kept Homer because interpretation and art are also things indifferent; the material of Virtue to be used well or poorly.

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